

*Ghostwriters in the
woodpile*

WHAT DID TRUMAN SAY ABOUT CIA?

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On 22 December 1963 the *Washington Post* and numerous other newspapers published an article syndicated by the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA), and signed by the late former President Harry S Truman, which concluded with the following paragraphs:

For some time I have been disturbed by the way CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational arm and at times a policy-making arm of the Government. This has led to trouble and may have compounded our difficulties in several explosive areas.

I never had any thought when I set up the CIA that it would be injected into peacetime cloak and dagger operations. Some of the complications and embarrassments that I think we have experienced are in part attributable to the fact that this quiet intelligence arm of the President has been so removed from its intended role that it is being interpreted as a symbol of sinister and mysterious foreign intrigue—and a subject for Cold War enemy propaganda.

With all the nonsense put out by Communist propaganda about "Yankee imperialism," "exploitive capitalism," "war-mongering," "monopolists" in their name-calling assault on the West, the last thing we needed was for the CIA to be seized upon as something akin to a subverting influence in the affairs of other people. . . .

But there are now some searching questions that need to be answered. I, therefore, would like to see the CIA be restored to its original assignment as the intelligence arm of the President, and whatever else it can properly perform in that special field—and that its operational duties be terminated or properly used elsewhere.

We have grown up as a nation, respected for our free institutions and for our ability to maintain a free and open society. There is something about the way the CIA has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historical position, and I feel that we need to correct it.

The starter's flag had been dropped, and the contestants raced into the field. Senator Eugene McCarthy (D., Minn.), appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* with an article entitled: "The CIA is Getting Out of Hand." Richard Starnes used the alleged Truman article as the peg for a column in the *Washington Star* headlined "HARRY S FIRES TELLING BROADSIDE AT CIA." Dozens of editorials along the same line sprouted in such papers as the *New York Post*, the *Tarrytown, N.Y., News*, the *Berkshire Eagle* of Pittsfield, Mass., *The Charlotte News* in North Carolina, the *Pittsburgh Press*, the *Cleveland Press and News* and the *Columbus Citizen-Journal* in Ohio, the *Milwaukee Journal*, the *Kansas City Times*, and the *Sacramento Bee* and *Santa Monica Evening Outlook* in California. It was open season on CIA over the 1963 year-end holidays, and for more than nine years since then the article in question has been stock-in-trade for writers of books and articles attacking CIA, most recently L. Fletcher Prouty in his *The Secret Team: The CIA and its Allies in Control of the United States and the World*.

The CIA rocked back on its heels for a while, stunned that the source for these attacks should be President Truman, the Enacting Father of the Agency, and the man who had put CIA into the field of "such other functions and duties"

by covert action assignments in Italy, Greece, and Turkey. In June of 1948, in fact, Truman himself had led the National Security Council to authorize the creation of a new office within CIA to carry out cover operations directed against secret Communist subversion (the Office of Policy Coordination).

Had Truman written the statement? It developed that he had *not*, but as the Germans say, "Lies have long legs," and by the time a denial could have been obtained, the impact of the original statement was so widespread that a denial never would have caught up with it.

Nevertheless, as long as the statement continues to pop up in fantasies like Prouty's, it appears to serve some purpose to get the facts into the record.

Allen Dulles, by this time in retirement, drafted a three-page letter to the former President at Independence, Mo., noting more in sorrow than in anger the views recited in the NANA article, and reminding him that while Truman had indeed stressed the role of CIA as the President's intelligence arm, he had also by his own action first put CIA into the covert operations field.

The draft, found in Dulles' papers, does not show whether or not it was sent. On 17 April 1964, however, Dulles was in Kansas City for a speaking engagement, and made an appointment to see Truman that afternoon.

In a memorandum of 21 April 1964 for the General Counsel of CIA, Dulles subsequently reported:

I then reviewed with Mr. Truman the part he had had in supplementing the overt Truman Doctrine affecting Greece and Turkey with the procedures largely implemented by CIA to meet the creeping subversion of Communism, which could not be met by open intervention, military aid, under the Truman plan. I reviewed the various covert steps which had been taken under his authority in suppressing the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, of the problems we had faced during the Italian elections in 1948, and outlined in some detail . . . the organization of the Free Europe Committee and Radio Free Europe, keeping hope alive in the Satellite countries, etc.

Mr. Truman followed all this with keen interest, interjected reminiscences of his own, recalled vividly the whole Italian election problem, as well as the Huk situation. I then showed him the article in the *Washington Post* of December 22, 1963, which I suggested seemed to me to be a misrepresentation of his position. I pointed out the number of National Security Actions (Action #4 and Action 10-2) which he had taken which dealt with covert operations by the CIA. He studied attentively the *Post* story and *seemed quite astounded at it. In fact, he said that this was all wrong. He then said that he felt it had made a very unfortunate impression.* [Emphasis added]. . . .

At no time did Mr. Truman express other than complete agreement with the viewpoint I expressed, and several times he said he would see what he could do about it, to leave it in his hands. He obviously was highly disturbed at the *Washington Post* article. . . .

I cannot predict what will come of all this. It is even possible, maybe probable, that he will do nothing when he thinks it over. He may, of course, consult with those, whoever they are, who induced him to make the original statement.

Even in retirement, Dulles was still proving himself a prescient estimator. There is no record that Truman took any further action on the matter. But the final piece in the puzzle fell into place six weeks later when Lt. Gen. Marshall S. (Pat) Carter, then the DDCI, was at the Truman Library in Independence for one of the regular briefings arranged for the former President by President Johnson.

Prior to their meeting with Truman, General Carter and his Executive Assistant, Enno H. Knoche (now head of FBIS), were chatting briefly with David Noyes. Noyes had been a White House assistant while Truman was President, and continued to serve him in various capacities in retirement. According to a memorandum based on Knoche's notes on the meetings, "Noyes evidently drafts Mr. Truman's statements and articles, and admitted quite freely the authorship of the Truman article on CIA which was published on 22 December 1963. . . . It is highly doubtful whether President Truman ever saw the article prior to its publication, as he was already beginning to age considerably at that time."

During the actual briefing of Truman, Knoche recalls, "Carter did get into this subject, at least slightly. He referred in general to recent criticism of the Agency and its operations, and reminded Truman that it was he himself who had authorized most of the early clandestine operations in response to such challenges as Italy and Greece. Truman broke in on the General's statement to say yes, he knew all that, it was important work, and he would order it to be done again under the same circumstances. He went on to add, however, that he had set up the CIA to pull together basic information required by the presidency, but which had been denied to him by State and Pentagon handling procedures. He said this was the main purpose." General Carter dropped the subject at that point, and went on with the briefing.